

LUTHERAN WOMAN TODAY

MAY
1993



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Embracing Diversity

Cover meditation ♦♦

I don't want to be a racist,
I won't tolerate "those" jokes,
I won't use "those" words.

But I am white,
so when I come and go,
when I cash a check
or buy a car,
the seller—
the other—sees
white
and says, "Okay,"
good,
all right."

When my Asian son
comes and goes,
cashes checks,
buys a car,
the seller sees
Asian Male
and says, "Maybe
I should be wary."

I don't want to be racist,
I won't stand by while
others are hurt
because they are not like me.

But I am white,
so my teachers
heard my questions,
took time to explain,
noticed when I was upset.

The teachers, preachers,
leaders
saw white
and said, "Okay,
good,
all right."

When my friend—
an African-American—
spoke in class,
asked questions,
became upset,
the teacher saw Black
and said,
"Poor girl,
not too bright."

I don't want to be racist,
I make choices,
I learn
about people,
cultures,
experiences,
which help me understand.

But I am white
and my culture,
my people,
my experience
all say, "Okay,
everyone is equal,
work hard,
try harder,
care,
and color won't matter."

But the bankers, and land agents
the senators and representatives,
the presidents and the CEOs
the pastors and the teachers
the heroes and the standards
have been white.

I don't want to be a racist,
but it's all set up
in my favor
because I am white.

I don't like the way it is,
because my God is not white.

*The Rev. Susan Ruehle
Milwaukee, Wisconsin*

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Jan Brosen

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chronologically abled!

woman is every age she's ever been.

What a statement!

As I rapidly approach my 40th birthday and am faced with the reality of one of those ages that end in zero, your February issue helps me meet the challenge with new insight.

Susan Jacobson's statement in her poem, "Like Mother, Like Daughter," "... my daughter/who is older than I/have ever felt myself to ..." adds additional insight to this new age I enter.

Thanks for a super issue that always me to feel blessed as I enter a new phase of life where I may consider myself "chronologically gifted" or better still, "chronologically abled."

*Carol Hines
Miller, South Dakota*

Just finished reading the February LWT, and as often happens, many articles seem to strike a chord with where my path is leading. I am almost 50, and I feel that call of awakening that comes at this time of life—almost a rebirth.

My call comes louder because this fall I learned I had cancer for a third time. I think I'm OK now, but realize I'm living on the edge. Every moment is precious and exciting, as I start some new career ventures.

*Christine Flagler
Kalamazoo, Michigan*

January views

Just finished reading "Shredded paper" by Gayle V. Aldrich (January LWT). As a farming partner of

35 years I have a different view of "Earthcare."

While using shredded newsprint for bedding for animal husbandry may seem like a sound solution for the environment, it is not a good solution to conserve soil. For farmers a better solution is a crop rotation which includes a small grain for feed, bedding and adding humus to the soil to build up our most precious resource—the soil.

*Sally Puttmann
Kingsley, Iowa*

In the column "Mission:Growth—Ringing in the New" (January LWT), there is a quote from Beckie Steele, new director for leadership development. It reads: "The challenges that the church is now facing demand highly competent and dedicated persons who understand their relationship to God and his call to us to reach others."

The church has always needed dedicated people. God uses us all, whether competent or not, if we dedicate our lives to him. There is too much to be done in our society through the church to start excluding those who are not competent.

*Nelda Andrews
Goldthwaite, Texas*

Thank you for LWT, an excellent magazine.

In the January issue, in T. Megill-Cobbler's "Reading Paul on Women" one sentence is unclear: "Paul argues only that when women prophesy, they should not flaunt decorum, but cover their heads."

Letters continues on page 4

Letters, continued

Isn't *flout* the correct word here, not *flaunt*?

Constance Kukuk
Earlville, Illinois

P.S. I myself am very thankful for correction fluid.

Thanks for your sharp eye! Although both usages can be found in dictionaries, flout seems to be preferred by most writers. —ED.

Gender irrelevant

This is to commend you for this past year's issues of LWT (especially Oct., Nov., Dec.). I must confess I was disappointed when this magazine first came out. It did not arouse my interest and was lacking (for me) in the Bible study area especially.

This year I have thoroughly enjoyed every issue. The material was not only stimulating—it was also interesting and thought-provoking. The Bible studies were relevant to everyday life, challenging, and left me spiritually inspired. Our circle looks forward to more.

It's irrelevant whether the articles are written by a man or a woman—they were graciously received and enjoyed. So now I pass them on to my friend who had cancelled her subscription.

Fran Estacio
Folsom, California

Let your friend know that she may rejoin the group at any time—at the group rate—or she can always find an individual subscription form on the inside back cover of each issue. —ED.

Issues support Bible study

Congratulations. You are doing great job, and each year, it gets little better. The Bible study has improved in interest, and it is coordinated with the whole issue. The yearly and monthly planning pays off. Before beginning the Bible study, I read the whole issue because in many cases it sheds light on the study itself.

We really do appreciate the hard work and time all of you put into making our magazine a success. Keep up your good work. We're out here—we just forget to tell you.

Adelaide Norgaard
St. Paul, Minnesota

LWT welcomes letters to the editor. Letters must be signed, but names may be withheld upon request. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Letters to the editor do not receive individual reply. Send to:

*LWT Letters
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EMBRACING *Diversity*

Jan Brosen

Tomorrow I would speak to them as a presenter, but today I was only among them. I slowly made my way through the crowd of fast-moving young people. Even in a crowd I was conspicuous. My differences were awkwardly evident.

I felt their eyes watching me, their stares judging me. And I heard their whispered comments, "I'm so glad I'm not like her! I'd rather die than have a disability like that! Being different must be awful!"

Only thoughtless teen-age remarks at a youth convention? Only things unthinking kids might say? Probably not. We've probably all thought similar things when confronted with someone or something that's different. We may be polite enough not to speak our thoughts, but the feelings are the same. The anxiety. The fear. The uncomfortable ignorance.

Differences do make us uncomfortable. Physical differences. Racial differences. Gender differences. Differences in orientation, economic class, and age. We are people who like to be alike. We like to be homogeneous in our background and viewpoints and experiences of life. We like things to be familiar and unchanging. But the differences around us do not allow that to be. Differences speak of unfamiliar change, and that's what makes us uncomfortable.

We're not alone when it comes to feeling uncomfortable with differences and change. The Bible tells many stories where differences were not immediately embraced. The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost brought with it many changes. There were a loud wind and

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dancing flames of fire, and everyone began speaking in unfamiliar languages. When these differences were first observed, it was thought that the people were drunk (Acts 2:1-13). Would our thoughts have been more accurate?

Or take the parable of the Pharisee who went to the Temple to pray. A tax collector joins him in prayer, but he is not immediately embraced and welcomed. Instead, the Pharisee's thoughts turn to his own good fortune that he thinks makes him better than the tax collector.

We may not meet many tax collectors today, but our reactions to the people we do meet who are different from ourselves are often similar. It is not easy, for instance, for us to welcome those who are homeless, or mentally ill, or infected with the HIV virus. They often remain outside our efforts to embrace diversity, because their differences make us most uncomfortable.

Despite our uncomfortable feeling, we are called to be a diverse church. We are called to embrace the diversity of all God's people. We are called to proclaim the gospel together, in unity and hope.

But we don't always hear that call with open ears and willing hearts. We'll *tolerate* diversity if we must. We'll *accept* it if we have to. But we aren't yet ready to *welcome* differences. We know we should be a diverse church, but that doesn't make us want to *embrace* diversity.

The call to be a diverse church needs to be more than another "must" or "should" imposed on us by someone else. It needs to be more than a checklist of quotas, or an intellectual idea with which we agree. Embracing diversity begins from within ourselves. It begins as a matter of our hearts.

Embracing diversity begins with an attitude of humility. So much of our society is built on hierarchical thinking. We act as though one person is somehow better than another, or above another in worth and importance. When we view the world as the Pharisee did, as though the challenge in life is to climb over and conquer others, then differences will always be fearful. Differences will threaten our place and identity in the world.

An attitude of humility acknowledges that we all live

EMBRACING
Diversity

with differences. None of us is the perfect person we'd like to be. We all have something about us that makes someone else uncomfortable and anxious. Our circumstances may be vastly different, but our experience of life is humbly the same. We are all searching and striving for the same things in life: security, understanding, love. Our need to protect our place on the ladder dissipates when we act with a humble heart. Humility creates a circle that is elastic enough to embrace diversity.

Embracing diversity begins with an invitation to friendship. It happens when we risk enough to get to know a person beyond their differences. Friendship doesn't change one's differences. But it does change the way we view those differences. The gift of friendship puts everything in a new perspective. Fear gives way to familiarity. Anxiety bows to a reciprocal relationship. Uncomfortable feelings are replaced with genuine care and greater confidence.

I left that youth convention viewed differently than when I'd first arrived. I was the same person, with the same disability and the same evident differences. But I'd risked trying to be honest and real and I'd extended a hand of friendship to those young people. No, I didn't change the world. But a corner of *their* world had changed enough for them, and for all of us, to begin embracing diversity. Diversity is embraced one friend at a time.

Embracing diversity begins with a recognition of our commonality as

God's people. Underlying our distancing differences is the magnetic commonality that we have been created by God, redeemed by Jesus, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Our common ground is undeniable. We have all been forgiven and given the Holy Spirit.

Every time we receive communion, the pastor consecrates the bread and the wine with the words, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin" (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, p. 69). These words embrace diversity because we all stand in need of forgiveness.

On Pentecost, Peter used the words of the prophet Joel to proclaim that *all* people had been blessed and given the

Embracing diversity begins from within ourselves. It begins as a matter of our hearts.

Y 1993

Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14-18). His words embraced diversity because God's Spirit had empowered *all* people, even women and slaves who were so often excluded. God's Spirit disregarded social barriers on Pentecost. God's Spirit is seeking to work in a similar way in our lives today.

*With humility
and commonality
in Christ, we can
begin embracing
diversity.*

In the "Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness" we pray together, "Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen" (LBW, p. 56).

Delighting in God's will denotes energy and optimism, joy and willing hope. More often, however, we exhibit reluctance and resistance when it comes to embracing diversity. We retreat in fear and skepticism. We are overwhelmed by feelings we didn't even know we had. Our actions and our attitudes often fight against, rather than delight in, God's will for diversity.

feelings we didn't even know we had. Our actions and our attitudes often fight against, rather than delight in, God's will for diversity.

We begin our worship service with confession and forgiveness. We need to begin embracing diversity from the same point. Let us confess all our uncomfortable feelings and blinding attitudes. Let us confess that we find it difficult to delight in God's will. Let us confess that we cling to the familiar and resist change.

Only after honest confession can life-changing forgiveness be given. Once forgiven, we are better equipped to embrace diversity.

Confessing our sins that divide people, and receiving God's forgiveness that unifies, are part of the redemptive process that transforms differences into diversity. With humility and friendship and commonality in Christ, we can delight in God's will, and begin embracing diversity. • CGA

Jan Brosen is associate pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Chula Vista, California. Because of cerebral palsy, Pastor Brosen walks with arm crutches.



Agaliece Miller Talks about Diversity

Josselyn Bennett

Agaliece Miller grew up in the Chicago of the 1920s, which she remembers as a time of racial harmony. People of all races and cultures lived together, attended public schools together, and if any thought was given to cultural differences they were unspoken," she said. In a career that spans more than 60 years, Miller has worked to recreate the kind of racial harmony she grew up with.

Miller—who serves as associate director for training and employee relations in the human resources department of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America— feels strongly that "the need to prepare for diversity seems contrary to our knowledge that all people are *already created equal* in the image of God, and should be treated equally. If our belief and practice are in accord with the truth of God's creation, then diversity in the workforce, in congregations, should not require special preparation."

But Miller knows we have a less-than-perfect world—and that people tend to focus more on differences than similarities. Many African-Americans, in contrast to Miller's experience, grew up in re-

stricted environments that did not include going to school with people of other races and cultures. Miller feels that right now as a society we are *talking* a lot about diversity but *doing* precious little to examine the root causes of the problems surrounding diversity. "We seem to be headed in the wrong direction as we approach the problems," Miller said.

To Miller we would do better to focus on justice issues, rather than racial differences. "Our judgment is clouded by symptoms of the problem, and thus we are prevented from uncovering the source of the problem," she said.

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"I believe that just knowing more about each other is not enough," Miller explained. "We must couple that with changed attitudes that reflect our mutual support for justice and equality. We must all be willing to change our attitudes about people of different races and cultures. There must be reciprocity within the relationships between people of color and White people." • GCA

Josselyn Bennett serves as director for age-span ministries in the ELCA Division for Church in Society.

The Tower of Babel

and

Pentecost

In Search of a New World Order

Ralph W. Klein

What is the “new world order” that has replaced the Cold War? Is it merely a time when we no longer have to fear nuclear annihilation? Is it a time for paternalistic governance, when the United States military rushes to put down a tyrant here, restore order there, and rescue the starving at a third spot?

Or is the new world order a time for a new tribalism, when the diversities seem only to divide, embitter,

and oppress? Call the roll of that “new order” last year alone: Bosnia, Somalia, East Los Angeles. Was 1992 the “year of the woman” or the year of backlash against women? The neo-Nazis hate the foreigner; the (Christian) Serbs rape (Muslim) Bosnian women as policy. Someone seems to have taken the lid off all the old feuds around the world.

The people who started to build the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) thought they knew the way to

a new world order: scale the heavens, make a name for themselves. They had it together, they thought: they were one people who all spoke the same language, going for bro-

What irony there is in that ancient story. The tower that was supposed to reach heaven was barely a dot on the landscape. The Lord had to come down even to see the tower (verse 5). God, who was willing to give our ancestors a great name (Genesis 12:2), thwarted the tower-builders’ quest for immortality: the name of their city, Babylon, became “Mixed-up Town.” With no trusting relationship in God, they also could not relate—or even speak understandably—to one another.

“Hey, down there, throw me a rivet.”

“Ich kann nur Deutsch” (I can only speak German. . . . Or Swahili, or Hindi, or Chinese!).

At one time people had felt comfortable with God and waited for God to come swinging through their backyard for a chat in the evening (Genesis 3). Now language—

miracle of human communication technology—had become a noisy, dividing people, not pulling them together.

Without the ability to communicate, human things were ruined socially and economically. They stopped building the city, their proposed gateway to mortality. God had promised them that they would fill the earth, but they stubbornly resisted that urge and hunkered down to their parochial concerns. Now dispersal would be ease instead of passing.

Still, God acted for and on behalf of people. God called Shai and Abram to continue the conversation among human beings started again—God wanted them and their descendants in Israel to become blessings to all the families of the earth (12:3). Much later God raised Jesus and started a cure that reversed the fact that the tower of Babel had come to represent (Acts 2). And what the prophet had longed for finally came true: God's Spirit rushed on flesh at Pentecost. Only one tongue of

fire was on each apostle's head, but that was a multicultural tongue—understood by Parthians, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia (the citizens of ancient Iraq), and all the rest gathered for the first Pentecost.

Joel foresaw a truly new order: both daughters and sons would prophesy; both old and young would become dreamers; even slaves would get in on the action!

Tribalism or new world order, which will it be? To embrace diversity is to live in God's new world that was born on the first Easter and baptized on the first Pentecost. When the Word became flesh, language again became gift, not burden.

Seeking security in a tower or in ethnic idolatry leads to disaster. In Jesus, God came down to see what was the matter with this mixed-up and disorderly world and to erase its confusion. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him so that the poor might hear good news, the prisoners go free, and the blind see (Luke 4:18-19). And so that we might use our di-

Being scattered over the face of the earth is once more good news and not bad;

diversity is promise, not threat.

versity not as privilege or weapon, but as evidence of God's cosmic rule that creates old and young, women and men, and people of every hue to fill the earth and govern it.

Being scattered over the face of the earth is once more good news and not bad; diversity is promise, not threat. • GC

Ralph W. Klein is dean and a professor of Old Testament at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.



ONE IN CHRIST

The Farm/Rural Crisis

Two participants in a recent farm/rural crisis One in Christ event share insights from their experience.

JOYCE L. CHRISTIAN

When I was invited to be a One in Christ participant, I had a choice of two events. The first was in Rockport, Arizona, among Navajo Indians, the second in Iowa in a farm/rural community. I quickly chose Arizona.

After all, what could I—a Black woman born in Harlem of Virgin Islander parents, who spent her high-school years on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas, and college years in the small town of San German, Puerto Rico—have in common with White women from Iowa!

Besides, the Arizona event was in early May and the Iowa meeting in October. I was sure October in Iowa would be cold, and since my retirement and return to the Virgin Islands, my body has once again become “tropicalized.”

Imagine my disappointment when I learned I was selected for the Iowa event!

For a while I seriously considered not going, convinced I would stick out like a sore thumb. But an inner voice kept nagging, saying, “Go, be adventurous, see for yourself.” When friends would ask me what was in Clinton, Iowa, that I would even consider going, I would flippantly reply “Corn.”

Indeed I saw a lot of corn, and soybeans—and unexpectedly—

great weather; but what I really saw was the courage, perseverance, strength and faith of women whose lives are in a state of turmoil.

This event was designed “to explore issues and concerns within the farm and rural crisis.” During the five intense days of meeting, presentations, and visits I began to realize how real and devastating the plight of these communities is. Life in many farm/rural homes has reached a turning point; living conditions are difficult and the times acutely dangerous.

Families are experiencing loss of farms, homes and businesses—losses that they have struggled to pay off. Households are being torn apart by domestic violence, alcoholism, emotional and mental problems are surfacing. The quality of life has drastically deteriorated—often with a sudden explosion.

As a member of two “minorities”—being Black and a woman—I always referred to myself as a survivor, never expecting to meet another Black woman. I would look at women like me with admiration and say to myself, “They are also survivors.” I have met and interacted with women who have experienced monumental losses of homes, finances and families, but who could still smile, praise God and reach out to offer a helping hand to others.



PARTICIPANTS AT THE ONE IN CHRIST EVENT

will always remember with admiration Judy Shelly and Mary Farwell, two dynamic young women who work with the own and Country Alliance for ministry," giving to help others.

will remember Judy's friend and her husband, whom we visited as they did the evening milking. This young couple works from sunup to sundown, but had smiles on their faces and never complained.

will remember our keynote speaker, Clarice Flagel, a Roman Catholic who is ecumenical in her thoughts and who filled us with fervor and the conviction that we, as Christian women, could indeed bring the plight of farm/rural communities to the forefront.

will remember Merle Freije of the One in Christ Speakers Bureau—a woman who pulls no punches. I will remember the Rev. Kwang-Ja Yu and Dolores Yancey of the Women of the ELCA staff, who worked hard to shape the event.

will remember all the members of the various congregations who prepared and served the

tasty meals we enjoyed.

I will remember the crazy, zany afternoon we spent at a country auction, and I am certain the people of that town will remember us. I will remember all of the other women who came from all over the United States to be a part of the One in Christ event.

I will remember all of these people, but mostly I will remember that Black, Brown, Red, Yellow or White, city-dweller or farmer, young or old, rich or poor, we are and always will be "One In Christ."

Joyce L. Christian serves on the Caribbean Synodical Women's Organization board. She lives on the west end of St. Croix, Virgin Islands, and is a member of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.



"One in Christ" continues on page 14

ONE IN CHRIST

The Farm/Rural Crisis

DOT MOHME

What rural crisis? Somehow I thought it was over! So Willie Nelson is still doing benefit concerts for farmers, but aren't things much better now? That's what I thought—until I went to Clinton, Iowa.

In Clinton 30 of us women heard the stories of farmers (both husbands and wives), pastors, businesspeople, and residents of the area during the "One In Christ" event on the farm/rural crisis in October 1992. We learned firsthand that the crisis goes on.

After dinner at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Clinton, an orientation led by the Rev. Kwang-Ja Yu and Dolores Yancey of the Women of the ELCA staff set the tone for the event. At Faith Lutheran Church in Andover the next day, we began to hear in earnest the story of how the crisis unfolded.

Its causes are many, but they can largely be laid at the feet of politicians. Farmers, we heard, were en-

couraged to "get bigger or get out" to expand their operations by buying more land and equipment, and to plant fence-row to fence-row to increase production. Farmers trusted that advice. But when the world market declined, they were unable to market the fruits of their increased production. Land values also declined; soon farmers could not extend, or repay, loans. Foreclosures followed, as well as grief, hopelessness and violence.

But amid the crisis is an amazing amount of caring. A program called "The Town and Country Alliance" was organized by rural and city churches to train people to interview members who were struggling to assess and prioritize their needs. The two women who explained the program had themselves lost farms and were now helping others with their struggle.

The first step was to get a group of self-sufficient people to share their needs and hopes. From that came



PARTICIPANTS AT THE ONE IN CHRIST EVENT

ONE IN CHRIST

The Farm/Rural Crisis

errals to social workers who assist families in coping with substance abuse, spouse and child abuse, and financial problems.

Five women pastors from several denominations shared their stories. Pastor Peggy Ogden-Howe's summary of rural ministry especially struck me. She described people in this area as dependent on agriculture and with a strong sense of heritage. There is total reliance on God, she said—for salvation, life, livelihood. The people are stewards of creation and value the church as the central core of their lives. They spend themselves sacrificially and expect the same. Their church is the place where Christ is offered in Word and Sacrament. Would that more of us sensed such dependency on our Lord!

The parish health ministry in area churches is another service offered to people who can afford health care in no other way. Through it, health-care assessments, referrals to physicians, visiting sick and shut-ins, and development of support groups within congregations are provided.

We felt the ripple effect of the crisis. Businesses closed, recreational activities were not as readily available, and unemployment was everywhere. In this beautiful part of Iowa, tourism is now

seen as an opportunity to bring re-employment and new hope.

We attended an auction benefiting Salem Lutheran Church; some of us had dinner at a farm, toured a dairy farm, and visited with members of St. John's Lutheran Church in Preston.

What can we as Women of the ELCA do? Could we encourage the establishment of rural/metro partner churches? Maybe. Something needs to be done to preserve a vital way of life: family farming. Our nation will continue to suffer economically, since the increasing deficits have been partially caused by present farm policies. In whatever ways we can, we need to be a part of the healing process in rural America, for we are all part of the same body. • CAG

Dorothea Mohme is president of the Southeastern Synodical Women's Organization of Women of the ELCA.

Married to Ed Mohme for 45 years, she has three children and three granddaughters.



DATE: Women of the ELCA realized a shortfall in its contributions for 1992, with the result that the One in Christ program, along with the Woman to Woman program, and corresponding staff, had to be cut. "Cross-cultural programming and ministries will continue to be important to Women of the ELCA," notes Charlotte Fiechter, executive director. "Given the fiscal circumstances, we need to construct new approaches for meeting this important organizational goal."

We Are Singing in the Light of God



Mary Ruth M. Preus

*Siyahamba ekukhanyen' kwenkhos.
We are marching in the light of God.
We are singing in the light of God.
We are dancing in the light of God.
We are praying in the light of God.*

Last summer at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Global Mission Event in Rock Island, Illinois, 1500 Lutherans sang this traditional South African song of solidarity. As song leader I stood in front and saw faces of joy: mouths open wide, voices raised in praise and jubilation!

We are people of God. We need to sing the songs of praise and liberation that spring from the lips of our brothers and sisters in South Africa, Brazil, Germany, China. We are called to sing these songs—to the beat of the drum, the drone of the fiddle, the wheeze of the accordion, the blast of the pipe organ.

Over the centuries, the music of Hebrew and Christian worship has been affected by many cultures. Christian worship music, like most music, changes over the years. You may feel that you and your family have been singing the same hymns all your lives. But, in truth, worship music has been altered over time by new and changing instrumenta-

tion, diverse cultural groups, secular music, and subtle shifts in rhythm and sound that happen when people sing together.

In our own liturgical tradition, Martin Luther—a connoisseur of all types of music—set some of his hymn texts to popular, secular tunes of his day. This practice continues to take place in many faith traditions. The rationale is simple: People recognize the tunes, sing them with gusto, and express their faith as a community in song.

Today, multicultural worship music is heard in Lutheran churches on every continent. However, the sounds we hear, the very sounds we produce, may seem strange to some of us. The rhythms might feel uncomfortable or difficult to learn. “No one in my congregation plays the congas or the penny whistle.” “I can’t possibly sing with the abandon of a gospel-trained African-American singer. Why should I try?”

These concerns came to my attention last summer at the Global

ission Events. I hope we will discuss them again this summer at the Women of the ELCA Second Triennial Convention in Washington, D.C. This is an important discussion to have! Why sing the songs of many cultures?

First, because you and your entire community/congregation will be transformed. Liturgical music from the Taizé community, for instance, is sung all over the world. We build bridges as we sing this music in Latin along with our Russian or Canadian sisters and brothers. Singing the Salvadoran folk mass enables North Americans to enter, at least a bit, into the lives of the people of El Salvador in a way that hearing a lecture can't make happen. Companion synods sing each other's worship music. And many Lutheran congregations are buying service books and hymnals from other faith traditions as a way to enhance their worship (see the list on pages 18-20).

What about the music we know and love? Must we forsake it now as we embrace diversity? It is easy to fall back on the familiar, especially with music. The songs I grew up with as a Norwegian Lutheran pastor's daughter are so comforting and easy for me. I know the harmonies and sometimes have all the verses committed to memory. For this I am thankful. My family fostered and nourished a strong sense of tradition and faith through family hymns.

My father sings

hymns in what I consider the definitive Norwegian Lutheran style—loudly with good breath support, but not a lot of show. When I think of good hymn singing I think of the summer services in Laporte, Minnesota, where many Lutheran pastors vacation. The singing is spirited, full of conviction.

This is one kind of Lutheran singing. When I worshiped recently at Bethel Lutheran Church in Chicago, I heard another kind of singing. The congregation at Bethel is primarily African-American, and many worship norms of the North American Black church have been woven into the standard Lutheran order of worship. This singing is different from Norwegian Lutheran singing. Boisterous, yes. Filled with spirit and breath, yes.

What was the difference? The overall sound and feel of the service. At Bethel we were accompanied by a grand piano and a Hammond B3 organ playing together. The congregation at Bethel didn't always stay strictly together, as we Northern Europeans tend to do. There was more room for improvisation, for personal expression, for shouting out, "Yes, Lord!" I listened and was invigorated. I sang along, imitating



We include the music of the entire body of Christ because it keeps our songs and prayers alive and vibrant, because then we can enter into each other's lives, and because then our faith is enriched.

what I heard, opening myself to nuances in the music. I felt blessed, transformed.

Today there is room and need for all of God's people's music in worship. Thanks to travel and the miracle of recorded sound, we have easy access to Christian music from every continent. We can learn to sing "Siyahamba" and perhaps learn of the actual context of the song.

This summer at the triennial convention we will sing "Siyahamba" together. How appropriate to sing "We are marching in the light of God" in Washington, D.C., a city where throughout the country's short history oppressed people have often marched for freedom and equality. We will count on "God's Gift of Hope" to accompany us.

How can the music of Lutheran worship possibly reflect only one tradition? As North Americans we are more than Northern Europeans. Our traditions span the oceans in all directions. When we employ diverse

worship music we are singing the songs of our tradition—our many great traditions. We include the music of the *entire* body of Christ because it keeps our songs and prayers alive and vibrant, because then we can enter into each other's lives, and because then our faith is enriched. Singing the songs of all the people completes the circle. •

Mary Ruth M. Preus is a singer, song leader, voice teacher and worship consultant based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She will lead the singing this summer at Global Mission Events and at the Women of the ELCA Second Triennial Convention.



Alternative Music

Resources for people of faith, justice-centered and multicultural music for worship. Compiled by Tom Witt of the Center for Global Education at Augsburg College. Available from Augsburg Fortress or St. Martin's Table unless otherwise noted (see source list on page 20).

African Songs of Worship

21 songs from various parts of Africa. Songbook \$4.50; cassette teaching tape \$8.95. [St. Martin's Table]

Banquet of Praise

A book of worship resources, hymns and songs in the spirit of justice, peace and food for all. Over 150 songs, many focusing on hunger and justice issues. Published by Bread for the World; proceeds go to benefit hungry people.

32-1-145

\$7.95

Borning Cry: Worship for a New Generation

Collections of songs and hymns for the congregation by John Ylvisaker. Vol. 1 32-10-2016 \$11.95

ol. 2	32-20-2016	\$11.95
ol. 3	32-30-2016	\$11.95
ol. 4, Congregational edition, 32-50-2016		\$11.95

Brazilian Songs of Worship

9 songs from Brazilian songwriter(s), some used at the World Council of Churches Assembly in 1988. \$9.95. [St. Martin's Table]

Pueblo de Dios Canta

A hymnal produced by the ELCA, intended for Spanish-speaking congregations; of the 111 hymns, 55 are bilingual.

Pew edition	3-489	\$7.50
Accompaniment	3-490	\$11.50

El Salvador:

Songs for the New Life!

Music by Guillermo Cuellar, from the El Salvadoran church. Cassette 69-8477 \$9.95 Companion book available under same name. [ELCA Distribution Service]

Overflowing Streams

Edited by Ruth Duck and Michael Busch. Original new songs for worship and well-known hymns recorded to reflect inclusive language. 32-428-15 \$7.95

Freedom Is Coming

Songs of protest and praise from South Africa. Cassette 35-9528-748 \$9.00 Music book for mixed choir 32-528-748 \$4.95

Another

A good, comprehensive collection of contemporary worship music, folk-style hymns, songs and psalms. Includes the best of contemporary Roman Catholic music.

Pew edition (softbound)	32-32601-536	\$6.50
Pew edition (hardbound)	32-32600-536	\$8.50
Choir, keyboard and guitar editions also available.		

Holden Evening Prayer

A contemporary vespers service composed by Marty Haugen at Holden Village. Singable, with inclusive language.

Pew edition	32-34601-536	\$1.00
Leader edition	32-34600-536	\$3.00
Instrument edition also available.		

Hymns from the Four Winds

A collection of Asian-American hymns. \$7.50. [St. Martin's Table]

In Spirit and In Truth

A worship book from the World Council of Churches Assembly in 1991. Includes order for daily worship, hymns and liturgical responses from many countries, in many languages. \$6.95. [St. Martin's Table]

Lead Me, Guide Me

The African-American Catholic Hymnal, featuring words and music to over 500 songs, spirituals, hymns, psalms, and liturgies.

Pew edition	32-1-536	\$10.50
Spiral edition	32-10-536	\$13.00

Many and Great: Songs of the World Church, volume 1 and Sent by the Lord: Songs of the World Church, volume 2

Each volume includes 25 songs from all over the world. Prices for each volume: book \$5.95; cassette \$9.95; compact disk \$15.95. [St. Martin's Table]

Continued

Now the Feast and Celebration

An alternative musical setting for eucharist by Marty Haugen.

Assembly edition

32-34881-536 \$1.00

Leader edition

32-34880-536 \$4.50

Editions for presider, handbell, and 2 C instruments also available.

Open the Door

Songs for liturgy and liberation by Ray Makeever. Book \$7.00; Cassette \$7.00. [St. Martin's Table]

Sing with Creation: Spiritual Songs and Hymns of Creation, Stewardship, and Justice

By Bret Hesla and Larry Dittberner, 1991. A songbook for congregations which includes both original melodies and new words to familiar tunes. Book \$7.00; \$10.00 including teaching tape. [St. Martin's Table]

A Singing Faith

New words written by Jane Parker Huber for 73 familiar hymn tunes; includes a section on "The Church in Mission—Peacemaking and Justice."

Pew edition 32-24055-79 \$8.95

Spiral edition 32-24056-79 \$10.95

Songs of the People

Collection of 30 contemporary songs and multicultural hymns for worship. 3-220 \$4.50 each; \$51.00/12; \$400.00/100.

Songs of Zion

A comprehensive collection of hymns, spirituals, and other music from the Black church tradition.

Pew edition 32-39120-1 \$8.95

Spiral edition 32-39121-1 \$11.95

Taizé I and II

A collection of responses, litanies, acclamations and canons in basic Latin text.

Music from Taizé I, people's edition

32-24333-536 \$1.75

Music from Taizé II, people's edition

32-27783-536 \$2.00

Vocal, spiral, Spanish, and instrumental editions also available.

Threads of Joy: Songs of Unity, Hope and Justice for People of Faith

by Bret Hesla and Larry Dittberner includes songs for worship, baptisms, weddings, and community events. Book \$10.00; \$13.00 includes teaching tape. [St. Martin's Table]

Voices: Native American

Hymns and Worship Resource

Over 50 hymns from various Native American Traditions within Christianity, including Choctaw, Dakota, Mohawk, Muscogee, Cheyenne, Cherokee, Navajo, etc. Published by the United Methodist Church.

32-957-1221 \$9.95

Women of the ELCA

Worship Resource Book 2

Includes services, hymns and songs from many of the collections listed above, for use in a variety of settings.

2-9376 Book \$1.95; \$21.45/12

Sources

Augsburg Fortress and ELCA Distribution Service

426 S. Fifth St., Box 1209,
Minneapolis, MN 55440
(800) 328-4648

St. Martin's Table

2001 Riverside Ave.
Minneapolis, MN 55454
(612) 339-3920

My Real Mother

Charlotte E. Fiechter

This October will mark the 14th year that I celebrate my mother's birthday without her. There will be no cake with candles, only a prayer of thankfulness for her life and the hope of a happy reunion one day.

God has been very good to me, in ways beyond counting. When I say my prayers of thanks, I am thankful for talents and opportunities, for friends and family, and most of all for my parents. God gave me the best father in the world, and God gave me three mothers.

My "real" mother came into my life when I was eight years old. She was a warm, wonderful woman who married my father and who, with courage and faith, took on the task of raising a bright, independent child who had already known and passionately loved "another mother"—my aunt, who raised me for seven years after my biological mother died in childbirth. There must have been moments when my new mother wondered about the wisdom of it all, but she never faltered.

What is it that makes a mother? Love, devotion, sacrifice? Hard work? Support for one's hopes and dreams? Biological connections? My real mother gave all but the last. She was my mother, my friend and my advocate. When the high-school guidance counselor

told her I had chosen a schedule that would be too demanding, she said, "Let her try!"

Did I need something special for school? Could we find the carfare so that I could go to summer camp? Of course, even if it meant that she had to give up something. Could she bake late at night for a surprise party? Would she drop everything, including the clean laundry, to rush to school when I was put in the cast of the spring play at the last minute? Did she push me to try harder, to dream bolder dreams? Yes!

Who held my head when I was sick, or my hand when I needed encouragement? When I was 34 and had emergency surgery in a hospital 500 miles from where my parents lived, who was at my bedside when I awoke? My real mother, of course!

God blesses us and gives us so many opportunities to share our love with others. In bringing together my father, my real mother and me, God gave her an opportunity to love two people and to make a family. And God taught me the unforgettable lesson that real love and real family come from the loving hand and the caring heart. • C

Charlotte E. Fiechter is executive director of Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Session 5 Lawful or Beneficial?

Mary E. F. Albing

Study Text: 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 6:12-20

Biblical Basis: 1 Corinthians 5:1—6:20

Memory Verse

"For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body."

1 Corinthians 6:20

Overview

How are we to deal with immorality both in the world and within the Christian community? How do we balance freedom and responsibility in our lives?

In Chapters 5 and 6 of 1 Corinthians, Paul continues in his role of an admonishing parent (see 4:14) as he responds to news about the community from Chloe's people (see 1:11) and to general talk abroad. Paul thinks of the Christian community as the body of Christ. Joined to Christ, all believers are a part of his body.

But the body of Christ in Corinth is experiencing difficulty in its understanding of freedom in Christ. There have been problems with church discipline, with lawsuits between members, and with immorality in general.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that because they belong to Christ, their lives are changed forever.



pening

acious God, you gathered the church together under the cross. By Christ's death and resurrection, your Word of grace and love has set us free. By the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to live in unity with all your people. May our actions toward others this day be the reflection of your great love toward us. In your name we pray. Amen.

understanding the Word**Community Issue**

The first four chapters of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians focus on the message of the crucified Christ and leadership. Chapter 5 begins the instructional part of the letter (for a review of the Greek form of writing letters, see page 10 of the Bible study resource book).

Some of the immorality that Paul was hearing about may have resulted from the influences of Corinthian culture. Corinthian men, for example, considered relations with prostitutes their right. But even in this morally lax city, members of the Corinthian congregation were engaging in incestuous practices that were not found "even among pagans" (5:1).

It is also possible that Paul's teachings of freedom, given when he first arrived in Corinth, were misunderstood and contributed to some of the uncertainty that had arisen around matters of faith. Some Corinthians may have interpreted Paul's declarations of freedom from the law to mean that they could do anything they pleased—no earthly thing could affect them. Paul strives to make distinctions between his interpretation of Christian freedom and that of others.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-11. These verses indicate that Paul had written an earlier letter to the congregation in Corinth, which has been lost. In the letter, Paul had instructed the Corinthians not to associate with immoral people. The Corinthians had understood this to mean not to associate with non-Christians.

1

verses 10-11, how does Paul clarify his earlier statement? According to Paul, whom should Christians avoid?

Bible study

Paul's words describing an immoral person (see verse 11) come from the traditional list of vices used to typify universal moral values. These vices are not necessarily problems in the Corinthian congregation, but they are concerns that Christians must confront.

2

In Chapter 5, Paul is addressing the body of Christ, not the individual. Why do you think he considers sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, drunkenness, and robbery community issues?

Read verses 12-13. In these verses Paul is referring to the incestuous relationship (mentioned in 5:1) that had been tolerated by the Corinthian Christians. At the same time, he is reminding his readers that it is God who judges the non-Christian, not they. The body of Christ should be concerned with the actions of its own members.

All Things Are Lawful for Me

Read 6:12-14. The Corinthians loved to say, "All things are lawful for me" (verse 12). Note that this statement is put in quotation marks to show that Paul is quoting a belief expressed by some people in Corinth.

3

Some members of the Corinthian congregation believed Christian freedom meant that absolutely nothing was off limits. Paul agrees that "all things are lawful" for a person freed by Christ, but how does he modify the statement? Why do you think it is important that he adds an additional phrase to the statement?

Another favorite slogan of some of the Corinthian believers was, "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food" (verse 13). This saying equates hunger and sexual desire.

The Corinthians put sex and food into the same category. All types of hunger were of the same character and importance. Again, Paul disagrees with the idea of absolute freedom.

4

What is Paul's modification of the slogan in verse 1? What is he trying to point out about God's expectations of Christians?

Temples of the Spirit

Paul redefines the Corinthians' definition of Christian freedom. Freedom is not selfish but includes consideration of other people. Each person's actions affects others. Therefore, all must act responsibly in their freedom.

Read 6:15-20. Paul also wants the Corinthians to understand the effect of their actions on themselves. One translation of verse 19 is, "Avoid immorality! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but immoral people sin against their own bodies."

Some Corinthians emphasized the importance of the spirit over the body and seemed to think that their bodies were not a necessary part of Christian life. To the Corinthians who are lost in spiritual matters, Paul emphasizes the importance of their bodies.

5

Notice the number of times Paul uses the word body or bodies in verses 12-20. In verses 19-20, why is the body so important? Compare verse 19, which addresses each individual's body, with verse 6, which addresses the body of Christ as a whole. Why is the change from all believers to each believer significant?

We are able to grasp Paul's deep aversion to sexual sins more easily in light of Paul's understanding of the body. In his way of thinking, such sins are sins against the body—and against Christ himself. Each person's body is a part of Christ's. Therefore, for Paul, each person's actions within the body of Christ have far-reaching consequences.

Interpreting the Word

Christian Freedom

Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to claim their freedom and still be responsible to others. In his treatise on Christian freedom titled "The Freedom of a Christian," Martin Luther

states, “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

At first glance, these are contradictory. How can we claim freedom and serve others? How can we call ourselves Christian and deliberately ignore others?

Although Luther stresses that good works will not save, he also believes that righteousness does not mean neglecting and despising good works. Our freedom never comes at the expense of others. Rather, we are always to come to their aid, as long as assisting them is not against God.

6

Luther states that “each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all.” What does it mean to be “Christs to one another”? What does it mean for Christ to “be the same in all”?

Paul does not destroy the notion of Christian freedom spoken of in Chapters 5 and 6. He clarifies it. First of all, he makes it clear that freedom is not a religious idea that is separated from reality. In real life, we have neighbors, and we must pay attention to their needs. Paul says in 6:12, “All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are beneficial.” That is, others live and work around us. To pay attention to another’s needs is to be responsible.

Second, Paul emphasizes that Christian freedom allows no one and nothing to master us except God. Paul writes, “I will not be dominated by anything” (verse 12).

In principle, nothing can enslave us. But since we have bodies and live on the earth, in this life, we are still vulnerable to the power of sin. The Corinthians’ indulgence in physical pleasure was not freedom. Rather, it led them to become dominated by their desires.

We live in community. Our actions have an effect on those around us and we are vulnerable ourselves. Therefore, we must always ask ourselves, “What is beneficial for others? What keeps us free?”

7

ed on Paul's words in verses 12-13, describe write in your own words Paul's concerns about Christian freedom and the ways they affect r life.

ving the Word

Christian Freedom and Responsibility

apters 5 and 6 explain the implications of the message of the ss. Because we have been claimed by God's love and grace ealed on the cross, we belong to God. We no longer belong to selves.

The cross does not separate us from real life or real people. On contrary, it asks us to die to ourselves. Therefore, as we enjoy Christian freedom, we also must consider the question of at is beneficial for all.

In *The Cost of Discipleship*, writer and theologian Dietrich nhoeffer writes:

"To allow [baptized sisters and brothers] to take part in the rship of the church, but to refuse to have anything to do with [them] in everyday life, is to subject [them] to abuse and con-
mpt. . . . And if we grant [those] baptized the right to the gifts alvation, but refuse [them] the gifts necessary to earthly life knowingly leave [them] in material need and distress, we holding up the gifts of salvation to ridicule and behaving as s" (Collier Books, 1963).

8

Andersons live an upper-middle-class tyle. A family in their congregation is goingough tough times financially and may loseir home. What responsibility do the Andersons have for their neighbors? Can youk of times when we must rethink our per-
onal freedom to benefit the good of the family, church, the community, or the nation?

nd in hand with respecting the needs of others goes the question of what we must do to stay free.

9

Sally tends to drink too much on weekends. Despite her doctor's warnings, Angela continues to eat foods high in salt, fat, and cholesterol. Both say they are only hurting themselves. What might Paul say to these women? What other examples of behavior that is bad for the body are common today?

In 6:19-20, Paul directs us to use our bodies in ways that glorify God. Although Paul is stressing sexual immorality in verses 12-20, another dimension that is important to consider is physical and sexual abuse. We must remember that we belong to God—not to ourselves or to anyone else.

10

Knowing that our bodies are precious to God, how might you respond to someone who is being physically or sexually abused?

Because of the cross, because we belong to Christ, and because we are part of the body of Christ, we are free. We are also responsible. Everything we do affects the body. It is impossible for us to live for ourselves alone.

Looking Ahead

Session 6, "Living the Life Assigned," will focus on living out the Christian life as a married, divorced, or single person. In anticipation of that session, you may wish to learn the memory verse, "However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you" (1 Corinthians 7:17). •

The Rev. Mary Albing is pastor of United Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, North Dakota, with her husband, the Rev. Bob Albing.

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Any comments or questions relating to the Bible study should be sent to the Rev. Karen Battle, Women of the ELCA, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631-4189.

of Pinocchio Had a Mom . . .

By L. Morgan



You remember the story . . . it's about a carpenter's boy (not a bad way to begin) who's literally a "chip off the old block." That's his first problem, you see: He's made out of wood.

Fathers like to make things out of wood. It gives them something to do with those hammers and saws that hang gathering dust on pegboards over workbenches in our garages. But wooden things have sharp edges and don't bend unless you put hinges between them. And the screws stick out and the grain shows and they smell like sawdust.

Folks took one look at Pinocchio and knew he was no more a real boy than Charlie McCarthy, despite Geppetto's wish that it might be otherwise. And that gets him into trouble.

If Pinocchio had had a mom, he'd have never been made out of wood in the first place. He'd have been carefully stitched together out of fabric. He might have had buttons for eyes; but he'd have been soft, not hard. And his edges would have been round, not square. And he'd have looked more like a real boy from the beginning, rather than a pile of tinkertoys and screws. Real boys wouldn't have taken advantage of him. No, some real boy or real girl would have tucked him in at night and hugged him and, if the Velveteen Rabbit is any clue, he'd

have become "real" a lot sooner.

If Pinocchio had had a mom, his nose would have been shorter because she'd have caught him the first time he bent the truth and said, "Don't lie to me, young man!" (Moms can spot a lie at 50 yards and are not easily "conned.") It's dads who are often pushovers for any child who interrupts their TV program with, "Mom said it's OK if it's OK with you." Dads actually believe this, when anyone with an ounce of intuition would know the kid is lying through his teeth. It's as plain as the nose on his face!

And if Pinocchio had had a mom, he'd have never needed some cricket in a three-piece suit to be his conscience because *she'd* have been his conscience, by Jiminy, from the day he was first glued together! She'd have taught him enough sayings to fit in *Poor Richard's Almanac*, and years after they'd still be rumbling around in his head like a broken record: "Waste not, want not." "A stitch in time saves nine." "Everyone *may* be doing it, but *you're not* everyone." "Bad company ruins good morals." "Remember to say 'thank you.'" And "Don't forget to wash behind your ears!" Someone with a mom once said, "A mother's heart is a child's schoolroom."

If Pinocchio had had a mom, he wouldn't have needed to leave home to find out how loved he was. "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you," God says in *Isaiah 66:13* (New Revised Standard Version), and we know what *Isaiah* means if we've had a mom. For we

remember burying our child's head in her soft lap and sobbing out of hurt until she kissed away the tears. When Jesus looks at the city he loves, he says with anguish, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often have I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (*Luke 13:34*, New

International Version). And when a preacher *Paul* wants to let the *Thessalonians* know how he and the other apostles feel about them, he says, ". . . we were gentle among you like a mother caring

"Everyone *may* be doing it, but *you're not* everyone."

— **Mom**

ing for her little children" (*Thessalonians 2:7*, NIV). We remember how mom could be so gentle and patient, how she cared for us. Even when we drew outside the lines it was "beautiful," and so were we. And when we dropped something and broke it and cried over the pieces, it was OK, for, "It can be replaced but *you can't*!"

Well, Pinocchio had it rough. He never had a mom. But most of us have been luckier than Pinocchio. And we ought to give special thanks to God for our moms on Mother's Day this year. I'm so very thankful for mine. . . . She's been the dearest mom to me, and I love her very much. And these words are for her as well as you: Happy Mother's Day, mom!" •

The Rev. Terry L. Morgan is the senior pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Kettering, Ohio. He also does free-lance writing.

One More Lesson

Lolita Ditzler

When I sat down beside you on the davenport and said, "How are you?" I wanted to hear, "Fine" or, at least, "Better." Instead you quietly said, "I'm dying . . . you're just the third one I've told. Bob and Sis are the only other ones know." Now I, along with your husband and your

er, am part of that inner circle of truth.

The room is full of our friends who are talking and thing. I want to shout to get everyone's attention but I know it's your story to share however you decide to do it. I catch your tone and say, "I'm sorry," and we both move on.

In our family, we grip our emotions tightly like a favor- boy, letting go only when we are safely alone. Later, I pull out my memories and my tears.

In today's vernacular, you would be called my mentor, when I was growing up, I just wanted to be like my older cousin, Doris.

As a child, I was happy tagging along whether you were feeding chickens, going to church and Sunday school, or seeing a free movie in the town park. The only time I was left behind was when you had a date. "He doesn't like little girls like I do," you explained.

Then I was in third grade, your old bicycle sat beside the Christmas tree. You pointed out the winged, silver H on the front column and told me, "It's a great coaster."

Learning to ride that bike was a struggle because it was heavy for my eight-year-old arms to pick up each time I would fall over. By summer, I was racing with the "big kids," and the only way I could win was to challenge them to a racing contest. I always passed them up before my bike would come to a halt.

You made my teen years easier. During the two years I was in confirmation, I had to take notes on the sermon every Sunday. If my mind wandered, you picked up my pencil and pen. I wore a one-of-a-kind dress to my senior prom because we took the train to shop in Chicago.

When I was 19, I spent five months in a tuberculosis sanitarium 25 miles away. Every Saturday night while I was there, the civil defense siren shrieked a test blast at 6:00 and you came to visit me at 7:00. I accepted both a routine.

Not all of your lessons "took." We spent years splashing around in Lake Koshkonong but I still can't swim, and stopping to read every historical marker along the roadside didn't pique my interest in learning about the past.

As I matured, the gap in our ages seemed to close. You were maid of honor at my wedding and godmother to my daughter Lisa.

Still, you keep looking after me. When we vacationed recently at your condo in Mexico, you brought me Kaopectate at 2 a.m. and encouraged me to go parasailing so I could soar like a kite.

All my life, I've looked up to you; but now, suddenly, you seem so small and

vulnerable. You have an insidious disease called scleroderma, which for centuries has been described as "the disease that turns women to stone." Its cause is unknown and there is no cure.

After years of being a strong, active woman, you must learn to pace yourself to accommodate the disease and continue your work as church librarian, township supervisor and community historian. Going out to lunch isn't a treat any more because your digestive system is hardening and you can eat only small amounts of soft foods and liquids. You sleep only about two hours at a time. Your house feels too hot because the slightest chill turns your fingers cold and white. On Sundays when you read the lessons in church you don't say a word beforehand, saving your voice.

I continue to learn from your example. Ruth's words to Naomi in the Old Testament describe our relationship: "Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16, Revised Standard Version). Now I find new meaning in verse 17, "where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more, also if even death parts me from you." • CG

Lolita Ditzler is a free-lance writer and a member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Durand, Illinois.

Sclero What?

Scleroderma, which is neither contagious nor hereditary, afflicts nearly three-quarters of a million people in the United States—80 percent of them women between the ages of 25 and 55. It is more prevalent than muscular dystrophy or multiple sclerosis, according to Thomas Medsger, M.D., chairman of the United Scleroderma Foundation Medical Advisory Board, but it is not well known and often may be diagnosed or misdiagnosed. Symptoms include:

- / swelling, hardening and thickening of the skin,
- / spasms of the small blood vessels in the extremities, with severe discomfort and color changes when exposed to cold or stress,
- / weight and hair loss,
- / joint pain,
- / swallowing difficulties,
- / ulcers on the fingertips,
- / extreme fatigue.

Medical science has found no cure for scleroderma and a few symptoms respond to treatment because the cause is unknown. Researchers believe it's a disease of the vascular and immune systems and a severe connective tissue disorder. Decreased circulation and increased production of collagen (the body's fibrous protein which some women rub on their faces or have injected into their wrinkles to make them look younger) hardens the skin and internal organs including the esophagus, heart, lungs and kidneys.

As scleroderma advances, it can render its victims helpless to perform the simplest task.

For further information about scleroderma, contact:

Scleroderma Research Foundation
Box 200
Columbus, NJ 08022
1-800-637-4005

United Scleroderma Foundation
P.O. Box 399
Watsonville, CA 95077
1-800-722-HOPE. •

Bulk-Buying Clubs

Melzee Jacobson

As we try to provide healthy food choices for our families, we need also to stretch our budget to cover the costs. Have you ever made a shopping trip to a health food store,

only to be disappointed by the prices and the lack of discount coupons for whole-wheat flour or low-sodium low-fat cheese?

We discovered a solution to the rising cost of healthy food choices 12 years ago. We pooled our purchasing power with other families and became members of a local food co-op. Food co-ops (and other kinds of food clubs) purchase food in bulk quantities at a cost savings.

In our co-op, we each make a commitment to participate in meetings in which we decide on our order, complete case lots, unload the delivery truck and break the order into single-family purchases. We share, much like a large family, and exchange ideas on food preparation ("Did you know that if you fry a piece of Provolone cheese, it tastes like bacon?"). We take risks and try new products. We share personal joys and struggles.

Through our years with the co-op our family has been able to enjoy



whole-wheat pastas and other specialty foods, purchase environmentally friendly products and support rain forest preservation efforts. We took part in a successful boycott of

chocolate products to protest shipping inferior products to economically poor countries.

Our co-op was created by spouses of Palmer Chiropractic (Davenport, Iowa) students and involves doctors, nurses, secretaries, bus drivers, sales clerks, and homemakers—people from all walks of life.

Our co-op sends orders to Blooming Prairie Warehouse, Iowa City, Iowa, which services 12 Midwestern states. For further information on co-ops, contact the National Cooperative Business Association in Washington, D.C., at (202) 638-6222. •

Melzee Jacobson is a domestic engineer who also works as order coordinator for PFC1, a bulk-buying club in East Moline, Illinois. A member of Messiah Lutheran Church, she is active on her church council, and in the Cursillo lay movement, prison ministry, and Scouts.



At the End of the Trail of Tears

John W. Bailey, Jr.

*This is one of the 43 stories that make up the book **Stories to Tell: Multicultural Ministry in Action**. The book tells of congregations and communities who, in reaching out to their neighbors and enjoying the richness of other cultures and traditions, are discovering the abundant life.*

In the northeastern corner of Oklahoma, nestled in the foothills of the Ozarks, is a place locals call "Green Country." It is the center of the community of The Five Civilized Tribes of the Cherokee Nation, a name given them by the Whites. It is the terminus of the infamous Trail of Tears, the agonizing journey the Cherokees were forced to make in the 1830s from their land in the Carolinas and northern Georgia.

"Whites called the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole peoples 'civilized' because, unlike some other tribes, they were a settled, agrarian culture," according to Donald Marshall, pastor of Eben Ezer Lutheran Church in the heart of this Cherokee territory.

Marshall came to Eben Ezer 13 years ago. "It was my first call out of Luther Northwestern Seminary in St. Paul. I guess it was a good match," says this Nebraska native.

"I became interested in Native American people in my younger days," Marshall says. "I grew up with racism and stereotypes directed toward Native Americans. White people in Nebraska make no bones about their hate for Indian people. Here in Oklahoma Whites and Indians have mixed culturally for a long time. Racism tends to take on more subtle hues, built into institu-

tions and ways of life more than it is expressed openly."

Few congregations in the ELCA have a more varied and fascinating history than Eben Ezer. It began with mission work by the Moravian Church in 1801 at Spring Place, Georgia. When gold was discovered in Georgia, White residents agitated for the removal of Indian peoples from their lands. This eventually led to the Trail of Tears death march in the bitter winter of 1838. President Martin van Buren enforced the 1835 Treaty of New Echota, which sold the Cherokee lands east of the Mississippi for \$5 million to a minority group within the tribe. As a result, 18,000 Cherokees were forced to journey to new lands in Oklahoma, a trip during which one in four died of disease or exposure.

Moravian missionaries accompanied the Cherokees on the Trail of Tears to their new home in Oklahoma Territory. In 1842 the congregation of Eben Ezer was organized, and in 1902 the parish affiliated with the former United Evangelical Lutheran Church, a predominantly Danish group that eventually became part of the American Lutheran Church and now the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

"About 75 percent of our 140 members are Native American," Pastor Marshall says. "We are unusual in that we do have Anglo members in the congregation. Among the predominant Baptist congregations in the area, Indians go to their own church and Whites to theirs." On an average Sunday, 90 people attend worship.

"We tend to be somewhat traditional, in that we have communion every Sunday, but we plug into our own stuff and uplift Native American culture," Pastor Marshall says. "For example, we use buckskin paraments with Cherokee and Christian symbols done in traditional beadwork. Our offering plates are examples of the very fine basket weaving skills of Native Americans."

In keeping with their ministry, Eben Ezer witnesses on behalf of Native Americans, and the congregation has made an impact on Oklahoma Lutherans. At a recent Oklahoma-Arkansas Synod assembly, Eben Ezer representatives introduced and lobbied successfully for a resolution that called upon the church to take a Native American perspective on the Columbus Quincentenary. It also persuaded the assembly to distance itself from the 100th anniversary celebration of the Oklahoma Land Run of 1889, which displaced a great many Native American families from their land.

"Although we are a small church, we are unique in many ways," says Charlie Tucker, a member of Eben Ezer. "We are the largest Native American church in the ELCA, and



the national church looks to us for guidance and direction on Indian affairs. We have some members serving on national committees, and two of our youth, Mathesha Grass and Vance Robbins, were elected to offices on the Multicultural Youth Advisory Committee. And we have established Mission Partner relationships with congregations in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Cherokee, North Carolina."

Eben Ezer has hosted the Oaks Rockyford Gospel Singing Association gathering each July for the past 18 years. The gospelrama draws 3,000 visitors, dwarfing Oaks normal population of 650 people.

The congregation also relates closely with the Oaks Indian Home, a church-sponsored home for children and youth, established in 1926.

"We are a community-based child-care facility totally supported by the church," James Morrison, a member of Eben Ezer and director of the home, says. "We receive children from three years of age upwards, but we also accommodate younger children so as not to break up a family.

"Unlike state institutions, where children must leave at age 18, our residents can stay with us longer. We can be home for young people during college or vocational school vacations or while they're getting established in a job. Our goal is to help them become fully contributing members of society, whether going to college or learning a skilled trade.

"We keep close contact between the Eben Ezer and Oaks Home," Morrison says. "We have an active chaplaincy program that runs throughout the week. Some church-related social service organizations have pulled back from specifically religious ministries. We haven't, and we expect our kids to be in church each Sunday."

Many alumni of the Oaks Indian Home have become pastors in various denominations. Morrison smiles and says, "I've grown fond of saying, 'We turn out some of the darndest Baptist preachers you can find.' " • CAG

John W. Bailey, Jr. is a free-lance writer from Philadelphia.

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For more information, contact:

Pastor Donald E. H. Marshall, Eben Ezer Lutheran Church, Main Street, P.O. Box 157, Oaks, OK 74359 or call (918) 868-2040. **Stories to Tell**, part of the ELCA's Multicultural Mission Strategy, is available through Augsburg Fortress (1-800-328-4648) for \$3.50, plus postage and handling (code 34-1-2105).

“A Little Boy Like Me”

Books for African-American Children

Wanda E. McNeill

Books for beginning readers of any culture need to be inviting—engaging the reader with colorful illustrations and large print, and featuring characters of the reader's age and race. Length is important; long enough to challenge, yet short enough to be read in its entirety, so that a child gains a feeling of success.

African-American children learn best when illustrations and stories reflect images and culture similar to their own. Reading about experiences of people of their own race can help them discover their own identity and potential.

When a child from the inner city reads *A Weed Is a Flower: The George Washington Carver Story*, and declares, “He was a little boy just like me!” the book has succeeded in inviting the child to dialogue with the subject. What power!

Here is a list of books my partner, Roger Truehart, and I have found helpful in our ministry of tutoring African-American children. And they come with the children's seal of approval!

What a Morning! The Christmas Story in Black Spirituals edited by John Langstaff (Margaret K. McElderry / Macmillan, 1987, 32 pages, \$14.95). A work of art, this story is told via African-American illustrations, spirituals, and a few words.

The Me Series: Adam and Me. Simon and Me. Zipporah and Me. By Betty Dennis Brown (Navarro Financial Services, 1988, 24 pages). These large paperback books have realistic pictures and large print. They are readable, biblical stories that end in the present.

Designed By God So I Must Be Special by Bonnie Sose (Character Builders for Kids, 1988, 24 pages, \$9.95). This secondary reader comes in European-American or African-American versions, and is a good opener for discussions.

The Beginners Bible: Timeless Children's Stories by Karyn Henley (Questar, 1989, 528 pages, \$16.99). Individual Bible stories, about four pages long, with delightful multicultural cartoon characters. This is an easy reader, inviting in its simplicity.

Rookie Reader Series: Messy Bessey, I Am an Explorer, Who Is Who, and many more (Children's Press, 1991, 32 pages, \$2.95 paperback). These are small books with few words. Beginning readers love to read entire books. Word lists included.

Jamaica Tag-Along by Juanita Havill (Houghton Mifflin, 1989, 28 pages, \$4.80). Illustrations are of multicultural children.



Wanda McNeill, right, with Lutheran Woman Today editor, Nancy Stelling.

Malcolm X by Arnold Adoff (Harper Collins Trophy, 1985, 40 pages, \$5.95). This secondary reader shows parallels between the life of Malcolm Little and kids of the inner city.

Wagon Wheels by Barbara Brenner (Harper Trophy, 1978, 64 pages, \$3.50 paperback). This primary reader, divided into short chapters, tells of a father and his sons on the prairie. Children connect quickly.

Black Heroes of the Wild West by Ruth Pelz (Open Hand Publishing, 1989, 52 pages, \$5.95 paperback). This secondary reader includes stories of nine African Americans who helped shape the West.

Afro-Bets First Book about Africa by Veronica Freeman Ellis (Just Us Books, 1990, 32 pages, \$6.95 paperback). This book traces African-American history, is illustrated with cartoons and photographs, and is a good teaching tool.

My First Trip to Africa by Atlantis T. Browder and Anthony T. Browder (Institute of Karmic Guidance, 38 pages, \$8.95). This great teaching book connects Africa, Egypt, and modern America through the eyes of a little girl. A glossary is included. • G

The Rev. Wanda E. McNeill is assistant pastor at the Church of the Reformation in Washington, D.C., and pastor/developer of Southeast Ministry in Washington's inner city (see March 1993 LWT).

Rock Mother Goose Book arranged by Elizabeth Murphy Oliver (Gaus, 1981, 48 pages, \$6.95). Similar to European-American version, except for illustrations and cultural differences. This is a large, hardcover book.

Seeds Is a Flower: The Life of George Washington Carver by Ailiki (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1965 and 1988, 32 pages, \$5.95 paperback). In this book children immediately see the parallels to their own lives.

I Have a Dream Martin Luther King, Jr.: I Have A Dream by Joanne Mattern (Dial Books for Young Readers, 1992, 32 pages, \$5.95 paperback). A quality beginning reader.

You Lived at the Time of Martin Luther King by Ellen Levine (Scholastic Inc., 1990, 72 pages). Organized topically, this text for second-grade readers provides good discussion and information.

Race, Ethnicity & Culture:

Developing a Social Statement

Joanne Chadwick and Larry Jorgenson

A

big-city problem.

George had attended a study session on racism several years before, and it had gone badly. So, he was alarmed to learn that some congregation members wanted to discuss the topic again.

Many Evangelical Lutheran Church in America members had similar concerns when they saw the draft, or trial version, of the ELCA's social statement on the topic. Why had they been asked for comments and recommendations on such a difficult, explosive subject? Why are congregations asked to work on social statements? Isn't that the job of experts in theology and other fields, such as science, law and economics?

True, experts are important in developing social statements. But the ELCA process intentionally involves people who live with the issues in various ways: church members, family members, neighbors, citizens, workers.

ELCA social statements are not just the product of professionals, task forces, boards, or assemblies. They come from the careful look *taken by the whole church* at God's Word and God's world. ELCA members helped shape the draft of "Race, Ethnicity and Culture," as they did 1995 statements on church and society, abortion and capital punishment.

The first draft of the race, ethnicity and culture statement sees cultural diversity as a blessing, given by God. As sinners, though, we look upon diversity as a threat or weakness, and put up racial and ethnic barriers.

lice did not want to spend time on the social statement. These things were all politics anyway. What did a statement on "Race, Ethnicity and Culture" have to do with a rural congregation? After all, racism was

The draft rejoices that, in Christ, the dividing walls of hostility are broken down. In the Holy Spirit, what were barriers are now the blessings they were meant to be.

Meanwhile, the draft says, the face of society is changing and will continue to do so. The ELCA has committed itself to reflect the cultural diversity of the society in which it ministers.

The draft reaffirms ELCA commitments in congregational life, outreach, education and ministry. It calls the church to continue to fight racism, which stands in the way of an inclusive church and which festers in society.

During the fall of 1992, ELCA members looked at a statement draft, discussed it, criticized it, and learned from others in the process. An important lesson learned: Vision is a far cry from reality.

Somewhere in the ELCA, a ministry in a multicultural setting founders for lack of funds. A Native American congregation doubts if other congregations take partnership seriously. An urban congregation experiences the "flight" of White members.

Somewhere in the ELCA, a person of color feels invisible to other worshipers on a Sunday morning. A pastor of Western European background doubts if anyone cares about cultural perspective. A member laments a lack of pastoral guidance in addressing racism.

These are but a few of the stories we heard. The ELCA, they insisted, needs lively conversation on this topic, one that translates social statement words into action.

Participants in adult discussion groups and regional hearings had a favorite word: *leadership*. They expected church leaders to call the church to repentance, and the church to show leadership in society.

We are, as Alice and George and countless others discovered, a church strong enough to face race, ethnicity and culture squarely and honestly. Members who have begun to wrestle with the issue will continue to do just that.

The social statement on "Race, Ethnicity and Culture" will be considered at the 1993 Evangelical Lutheran Church in America churchwide assembly in Kansas City, Kansas. For more information, contact the Office of Studies, Division for Church in Society, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631. • CGA

Anne Chadwick is executive director of the ELCA Commission for Women. The Rev. Larry Jorgenson is associate director for studies for the ELCA Division for Church in Society.

The first draft of the race, ethnicity and culture statement sees cultural diversity as a blessing, given by God.

Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Groenewold

◆ Pennsylvania congregation provides medical care

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, a 600-member congregation in Mountaintop, Pennsylvania, operates the Mountaintop Free Medical Clinic, which treats common short-term ailments for people who are financially stretched. The clinic uses donated equipment and is staffed by professionals who donate their time.

Dear God, thank you for creative ministries.

◆ Korean Lutherans need more workers

The Lutheran Church in Korea (LCK) has started many new programs, new churches and a new seminary in the past three decades. It has seen an overall increase in church membership of 8 percent. Now there is a shortage of workers to plant new churches, nourish those already in place and cultivate the LCK programs. Four congregations are still "missions." Each congregation normally has five years to become self-supporting.

Savior of all, bless the church in Korea with willing workers.

◆ 'Boomers' connect faith and life

ELCA 'baby boomers' met in Albuquerque in February to explore their relationship with the church and their roles as church members. They focused on topics such as family, lifestyle, society, spirituality and vocation. The event also featured special worship experiences and entertainment.

Thank you for chances to share and grow in our faith, O God.

◆ Indian woman heads Lutheran agency

The Rev. Prasanna Kumari is the new executive secretary of the Madras-based United Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, the umbrella agency of 11 Lutheran church bodies in India. The first woman to hold the position, Kumari also was one of the first Lutheran women ordained in India in September 1991. India's Lutheran churches discussed women's ordination for more than 15 years.

Thank you for all the gifts you give the church, Loving Savior.

Remember to add to your daily prayer list people and issues in the news. •

Sonia C. Groenewold is senior news editor of The Lutheran.

MISSION:

Growth

Appreciating Differences

Amost of us say we value diversity. But do we live it we really do?

We see examples daily of how independent our world is. And asers and women committed to ciples of diversity, we know the lenges in our church, society world need all of us to make a rence in peoples' lives. If all of re needed, so too are all of our es.

ut do we really appreciate rentness? Consider some of the changes we make daily: our communication at home, at church, at k, in the neighborhood. We say value diversity, but do we live a judgmental lifestyle?

studies of human behavior, as as our own observation, tell us normal people fall into behav- that can be categorized: some ons are direct in their commun- tion style, some are highly anal, some are highly motivated they approach tasks, some are l and dependable in every situ- n. Maybe you have also noticed

a person who is highly moti- d may also talk incessantly, her who is wonderful at keep- the circle treasury may act as if bottom line is the only important g. Or your most loyal circle'

leader also can resist change tooth and nail! We all have strengths and weaknesses.

When someone does something in a manner different from us, what do we say . . . do . . . think?

In the last six months I've tried to pay more attention to my own reactions to difference, and I found that often I judge rather harshly when others do not do things my way. This sort of judging gets in the way of my fully embracing diversity.

In a world where independence and self-reliance are virtues, what a huge challenge it is to work interdependently, valuing the different contributions and styles of all. I cannot read the words of Romans 12:4, "Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these mem- bers do not all have the same func- tion . . ." (New International Ver- sion) without feeling that to live out these words means not simply to tolerate another's style, but to embr- ace it for the good that God is offering through the uniqueness of that person. •

*Beckie M. Steele
Director for Leadership
Development*

MISSION:
*Action*Thinking, Dreaming, Moving
Toward Inclusivity

As I write, I have the February LWT before me, with its theme "A woman is every age she's ever been."

The first two titles, "*Freedom to Be Yourself*" and "*Becoming Wise Women*," as well as some of the issue's content, speak to diversity. How much more exciting life can be when we allow persons to be themselves, whether the differences are in age or ethnicity.

However, allowing people freedom to *be* and to *be themselves* is far easier said than done. We humans seem to be so much more comfortable when everything (including people) is predictable, familiar, controllable.

Those who planned for diversity in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and in Women of the ELCA did not build in all the supports needed to live out diversity as mandated in both constitutions. So what can we do?

The churchwide board of Women of the ELCA has taken several steps. First, it asked each synodical women's organization to name an affirmative action committee. Second, a board committee has been crafting a policy statement (which will be completed by the Second Triennial Convention) to undergird

all work on inclusivity. It takes into account the policies and actions churchwide and synodical groups have up to this point, and offers guidance and a framework for the future.

That statement says that the first task of synodical affirmative action committees is to educate participants on matters of racial justice, institutional racism and the benefits of ethnic diversity. That is to be done in the understanding that we are part of the ELCA, which is in the midst of work on a social statement on "Race, Ethnicity and Culture" (see p. 40). Individuals can study the first draft of the statement, now in the process of being revised. The revision will be voted on at the churchwide assembly beginning in August. Women should be involved in discussion of the statement, both before and after the assembly.

For a list of resources on racism and inclusivity, and a first draft of the race, ethnicity and culture social statement, write Affirmative Action, Women of the ELCA, 8765 Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.

Joan Pope
Director for Peace
with Justice

MISSION:

Community

Embracing Diversity

Diversity is defined as being different, distinct or varied. We hear a lot today about diversity: diversity in the workplace, diversity in the church, diversity in our communities. Many people act as though diversity were really new, politically correct concept. So we talk about "seeking" diversity, "managing" diversity and "accepting" diversity. Actually, diversity is as old as creation, and though Christians may disagree about what is "politically correct," what is more important is what is "spiritually correct." Diversity is God's gift to us; and we are called to use it, with all of God's gifts, to bring about the kingdom of heaven and to bring each other home.

When God planned creation, the diversity of that creation and its creatures was not an accident. God was intentional and colorfully imaginative in creating us with unique cultural, physical and spiritual characteristics or gifts. "But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4:7).

It is important that we not only accept that we are different and accept that God calls us to love one another, but that we rejoice in our differences; that we celebrate the variety of our gifts and that we "love another with mutual affection;

outdo one another in showing honor" (Romans 12:10).

We are not called to passive acceptance of diversity but rather to an active and grateful response to the blessing of diversity expressed through our multicultural communion. Diversity is not a burden to be borne but a gift to be received. It is evidence of the abundance of

God's love for us and God's loving care in equipping us to carry out our individual and collective ministries. "The gifts

he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ . . ." (Ephesians 4:11,12).

If we are to be a truly inclusive church, we must move from *accepting* to *embracing* diversity. Let us not be content to follow in passive obedience but let us run to meet and embrace one another in joyful anticipation of sharing God's gift! •

Dolores Yancey

Director for Community and Organizational Development

Join Us in D.C.

Here are a few reasons to attend the Second Triennial Convention of Women of the ELCA, August 7-10, 1993, in Washington, D.C.:

■ **Hope-full.** Explore, experience and share "God's Gift of Hope," the triennial convention theme. Among other verses, the convention Bible study, "God's Gift of Hope," will consider Jeremiah 29:11.

■ **A Joyful Noise.** Put thousands of Lutheran women together and what do you have? Incredible singing! Infectious laughter! Passionate discussion!

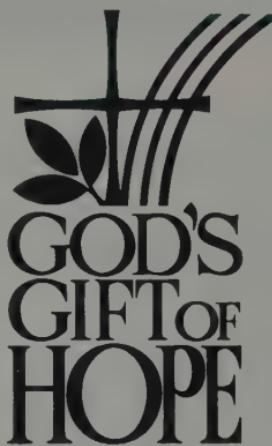
■ **Growing in Faith.** Experience inspiring and festive worship, Bible study, speakers. Encounter important topics at awareness sessions (workshops).

■ **Living Faith.** Learn how to stand with women and children living in poverty—Women of the ELCA's triennial emphasis. Practice prayerful advocacy as the "Convention without Walls" goes to Capitol Hill or an area ministry.

■ **Vision.** Help shape Women of the ELCA. Participate in hearings. Catch the vision of Women of the ELCA and the coming triennium.

■ **D.C. Civics and history come to life in Washington, D.C.** The Capitol . . . the White House . . . the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. . . . Special hotel rates are good for three days before and after the convention. Optional tours of D.C. also are available.

■ **Resources.** Explore "Crossroads of Hope," a huge exhibit area of resources to bring back to your congregational unit, congregation and home.



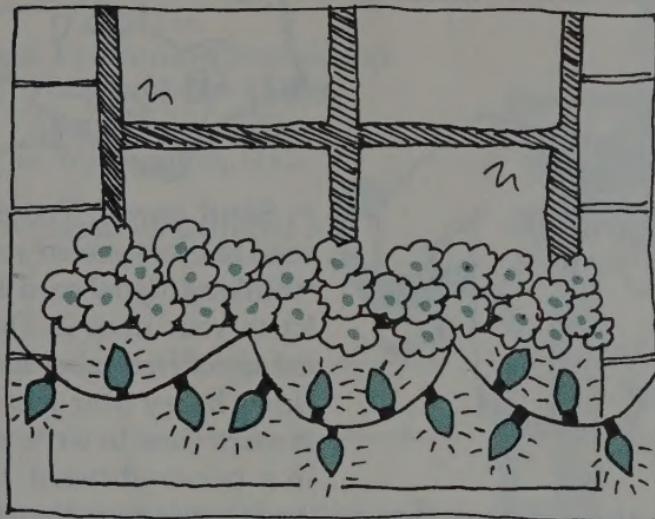
Learn of Bible studies, programs, speakers. The Allentown Fort Washington area will have new and favorite resources as well as items made by women from around the world.

■ **Sing to the Lord!** The convention hall will resound with musical and cultural song. A choir of convention participants will sing at the opening convention worship service at the National Cathedral and throughout the convention.

■ **Issues of Concern.** A pre-convention Workshop on Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence will be offered on August 6. Following the convention, on August 10, a Multicultural Conference on the Environment will explore care for God's creation. Register for these optional events via the triennial convention registration form. Registration is limited; please register early.

■ **Christian Community.** Meet other women who share your faith and concerns. Make new friendships, and renew old ones. •

For more information, or for a registration packet, write Women of the ELCA Triennial Convention, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4189 or call Donna Wieser at 1-800-638-3522 ext. 2450.



Christmas in May

Charlotte Jones

brother! Some experts now say Christmas didn't happen on December 25. Considering the Bible's mention of the shepherds tending their flocks at night, Jesus was probably born in August.

Another astronomer suggests alignment of the stars indicates Jesus might have been born in May. August? May?

They've got to be kidding. Do you think I'm going to set up that tree again? And do all that baking? And buy all those presents?

But, wait! That's the commercial aspect of Christmas—the hoopla that gets many merchants through the lean months.

What's wrong with having Christmas in August? Or in May? Or in any other month? Sure, a sec-

ond Christmas. A Christmas without the tree, without the fattening food, without the inappropriate or expensive gifts.

A second Christmas might be more of a celebration of Jesus's birth and teachings than has evolved in December. For those of us who grumble that Christmas (in December) is too commercial and we're too busy to live the spirit of Christ's message, why not have a second Christmas? With no exact date, there would be no deadlines, no countdowns, no "late" mail, no huge expense.

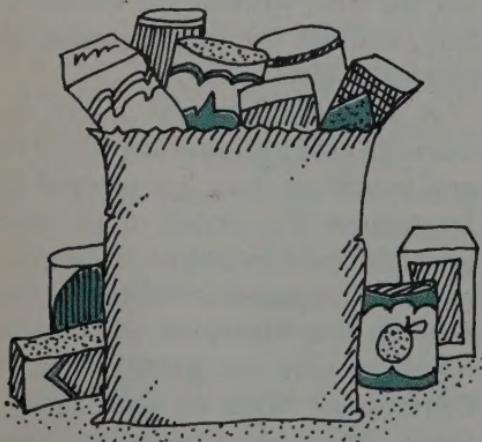
Have your own wonderful, secret, perfect Christmas. Use your imagination. Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- **Phone someone.** Instead of

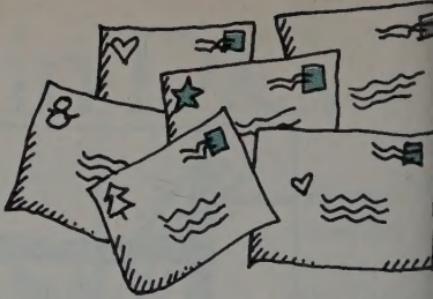
making fudge, phone someone who might be lonely or housebound. Or call someone you haven't talked to for a while.



- **Give something away.** Has a friend always admired a certain picture or piece of jewelry? Give it to her. Tell her it's a Christmas gift—or if you prefer, that it's for no reason (but *you* will know it's in the spirit of Christ). Or clean a closet and make a donation box for a favorite charity.



- **Instead of baking 20 dozen cookies,** take some canned or packaged goods to the local food-share organization or a church food bank. Or send what the flour, sugar, and shortening would have cost to your favorite charity.



• **Send cards!** You don't have to send to everyone on your list, but a "thinking of you" card might mean a lot to your aunt in Detroit. In the deluge of December mail, we sometimes hurry over messages. This is more time to write a longer message in a non-traditional holiday card. And there's more time for the recipient to enjoy your message.

• **Many homes enjoy** more music at Christmas time. You don't have to play Christmas carols (some things are sacred to the season!), but Cervantes wrote, "Where there is music, there can be no evil." What a better testimony to Christ's love!

• **Have friends in** for the "holiday" when the pressure is off. Keep it simple, so you can enjoy their company.

A second Christmas? Choose your own month, your best time. It's your secret—a time to celebrate Jesus in a personal way.

Christmas in May. It might not be such a bad idea! • **GA**

Charlotte Jones is a free-lance writer who lives in Boulder, Colorado, with her husband and son. Most of her writing is for children, including her latest book, Mistakes That Work (Doubleday, 1991).

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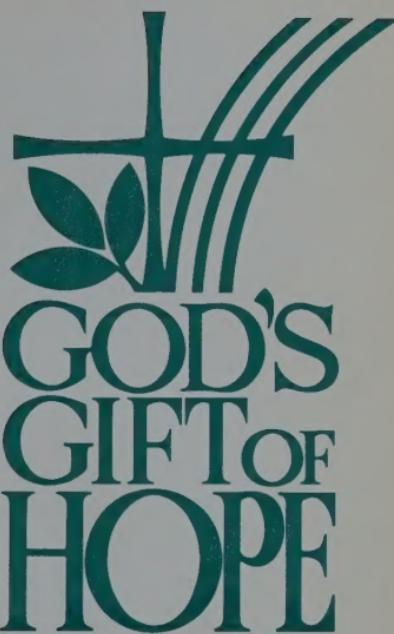
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